MASTERING BARRE CHORD TECHNIQUE AND THEORY

BY JAKE LIZZIO

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INTRO AND PRE-CHECK

I believe the most frustrating phase of learning guitar is when a student first learns barre chords. To ease that pain, this course will break the entire process down into manageable lessons with crystal-clear explanations along the way. It's important that you don't skip any lessons, even if you're familiar with the concept taught in the lesson. Each video contains technique advice and insight that will be built upon in the following videos.

How To Take This Course

Watch each video first before reading the text. Then read through the lesson to review and see/hear the musical exercises. You are welcome (and encouraged) to advance to the next lesson, even if you haven't mastered the current lesson — it's perfectly fine to stock up on knowledge now while your skills take time to increase.

The Right Gear

Don't set yourself up for failure by practicing on the wrong equipment! It's crucial that you're working on a guitar that is properly set up.

The distance between your guitar strings and the fretboard is called the action — if this distance is too wide then it requires a lot of pressure with your fretting hand to produce a note. Even advanced players will completely fail to produce all of the notes of a barre chord if the action is too high.

If you're unsure whether your guitar is set up properly, it's best to ask an experienced player, teacher. Generally speaking, your strings should lay as close to the fretboard as possible without buzzing up against them after being plucked. This distance is usually between 2mm (roughly the width of a nickel) and 3 mm (roughly the width of a nickel + a penny).

Regarding guitar picks: though later chapters in this course will explore fingerstyle options, it's advised you use a pick while advancing through these lessons. I'd suggest a pick between .6mm and .9mm for these exercises, keeping in mind that a thinner pick tends to sound better on an acoustic guitar.

Acoustic vs Electric

This course is designed for acoustic and electric players. However, if you have the option as a beginner, I do recommend working through these lessons first on the electric guitar and not the acoustic.

Generally speaking, electric guitars are easier to play barre chords on. They have thinner necks, lighter strings, and lower action, which will bring quicker success for absolute beginners with less pain and frustration.

Practice Schedule and Expectations

These techniques will require consistent and steady practice, but don't need to consume your schedule. Simply working on the exercises for 5 minutes each morning and evening is enough to get your neurons building the right pathways. Multiple practice sessions each day, for shorter spans, are immensely effective. What you don't want to do is only practice once-a-week for a long period of time — guitar practice is not a bank, you can't just deposit everything all at once.

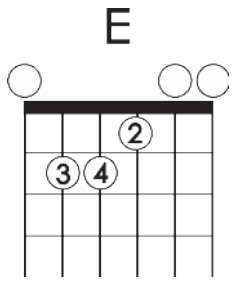
If you do the above, you can and will be able to play barre chords with ease. Just don't expect that to happen overnight — in my experience, the journey from "I can't play these" to "Wow I'm actually doing it!" takes at least a month, and usually longer. I think it's reasonable to shoot for 3-4 months as a general goal to get comfortable with what's taught in this course. If you find yourself struggling, just remember that being bad at something is the first step in getting good at it. You mustn't let any early frustrations or doubts dissuade you from your goal here.

With all of that said, we can now begin learning our barre chords, starting with the 6th string major shape (commonly called the "E shaped" chord).

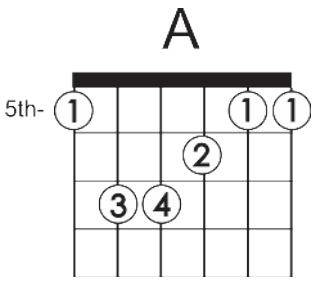
LESSON 1: BASIC TECHNIQUE

Learning the “E Shaped Barre Chord”

Fret an E major chord (we can call it “E” for short) using the fingers shown below. Note, these are not the fingers we’d normally use for an E, but we want to keep our index finger free for the next step.



Now slide your fingers over so they cover frets 6 and 7, then place your index finger all the way across the 5th fret as shown. This will create an A major chord (or “A” for short). We’ll understand why and how that happens soon.



Your job is to get every one of those notes ringing out. Spend the first week of your practice on this simple (yet difficult) goal.

Technique Advice

To get every note ringing out clearly, the following tips are offered:

- Ensure your thumb is on the back of the guitar neck and not wrapped over the top. The thumb provides the clamping pressure we need to fret a note, so experiment with it’s placement by moving it lower than usual.

- Don’t place your fretting fingers in the center of the fret. Instead, cram them up against the edge that’s closest to your bridge (where you pick and strum). The closer you are to this edge, the less pressure you have to apply to the strings to get them to ring out. If your fretting fingers are too far to the other edge (near the headstock), it can be impossible to create enough pressure.

- The direct front of your index finger has lots of fleshy padding that can prevent us from properly fretting a note. Try using more of side of your index finger instead.

- The folds and creases in your index finger might lay directly against a string, preventing it from fretting it properly. Experiment with lifting your index finger higher than it needs to be to prevent this (or lower).

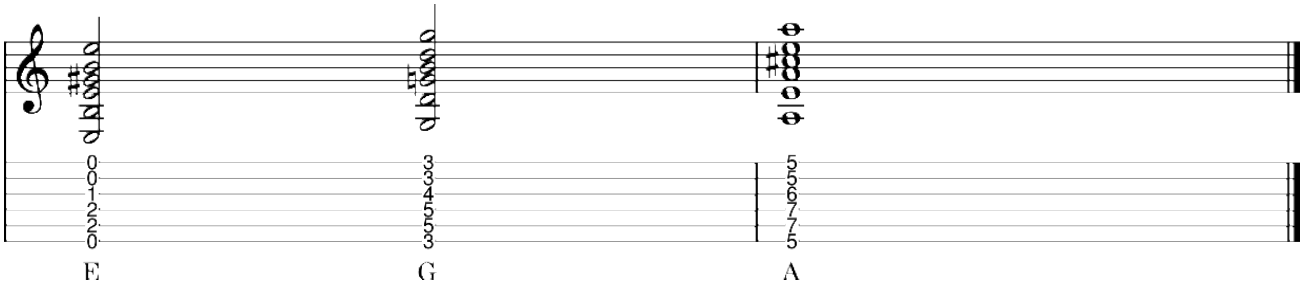
- Try changing your posture to see if it helps your fingers access the frets at a better angle. You can try raising your guitar with a strap, which allows you to lower your elbow a bit more.

- Even though the index finger only needs to produce 3 ringing notes, it's worth practicing a single "big barre" where your index finger just clamps down across an entire fret. This helps build the positioning and strength needed without coordinating the other fingers.

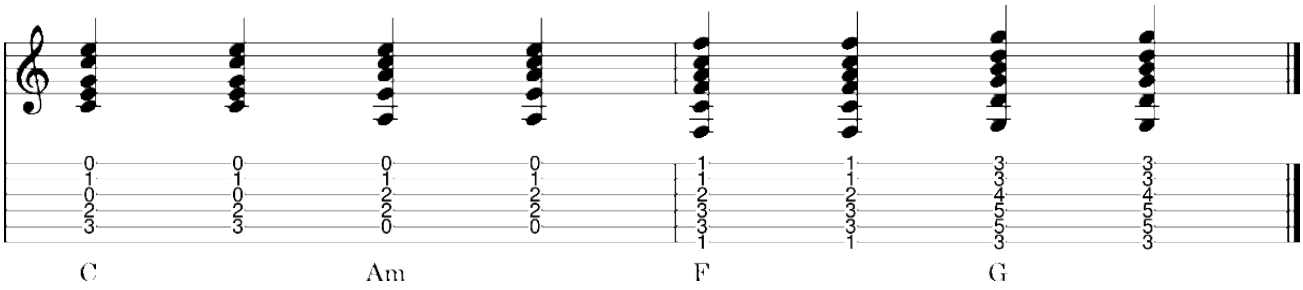
Week 1 Practice and Exercises

This week's practice should consist of getting an entire barre chord to ring out (each note sustains without being muted). Practice this in different places on your fretboard — in our example, our index finger barred the 5th fret, but you should try it on the 1st fret also. The tension on the strings is higher here and the frets are further apart, making it more challenging. Also try it up high near the high frets (10, 11, 12), where the frets are so close together that your fingers have little space to move.

Once your comfortable getting a single barre chord to ring out in any position, practice the following exercise. It cycles between three chords, E G and A. The first chord (E) is played in open position, using the awkward fingers we learned at the start. Then our hand slides up to barre the third fret which creates a G, then lastly to the fifth fret to play an A. Repeat on a loop. As you perform this, try to "lock" your other fingers in place so you don't have to reposition them as you slide into the next chord.



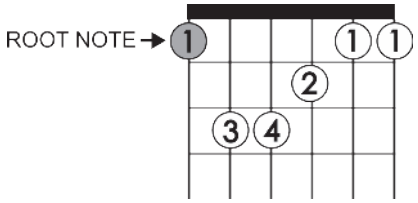
Next, let's try combining open chords and barre chords. Switching between these two is very difficult at first, and might take weeks of practice until it can be done smoothly. However, the changes between barre chords (like F and G) should go more quickly since they're identical shapes.



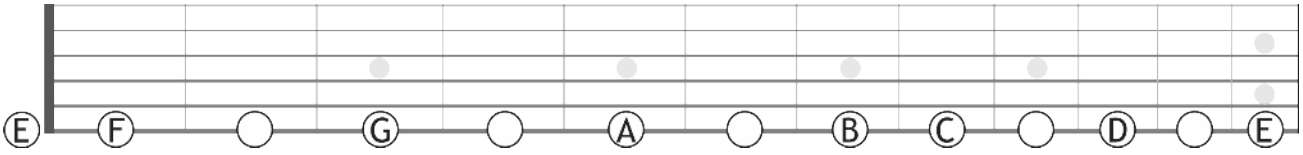
LESSON 2: 6TH STRING MAJOR SHAPE

The 6th String Major Shape

What we just learned is commonly called the "E-shaped barre chord," for what should be obvious reasons — it looks like an E! What's more important to know though is how this shape can help us create every major chord in musical existence. The lowest note in this shape (the note being fretted by our index finger on the 6th string) is the **root note** of a major chord. That means whatever note our index finger is fretting, that's the name of the chord. When we were playing A major, our index finger was playing A on the low 6th string (the thick string).



The same shape can be moved anywhere on the fretboard to create all the major chords. As long as you know the notes on your low string, you know the name of the major chord you're playing. That's why your next job is to learn the notes on the 6th string — to do so, I advise you memorize the fret locations of all natural notes (notes that don't use a sharp or flat). As shown below, frets 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 12 are all home to natural notes. (F G A B C D E).



Those frets in between are home to accidentals, notes that use sharp (#) or flat (♭) signs. You can think of sharp as meaning "higher" and flat as meaning "lower." For example, the 2nd fret can be called F# (a higher F) or G♭ (a lower G). That means a barre chord played across the 2nd fret could be called an "F sharp major chord" or a "G flat major chord." Which name should you use? It really doesn't matter right now for our studies, and only becomes important when notating music or communicating with other musicians.

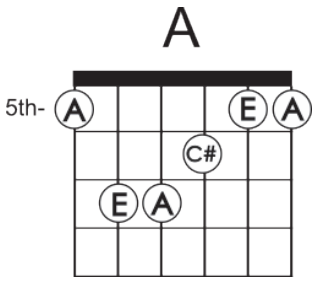
Now that you understand this, we're going to start referring to the shape we've learned as the 6th string major shape instead of "E-shape." This new name clearly tells us that the shape creates a major chord, and that its root can be found on the 6th string. Later, we'll learn 6th string minor shapes (these create minor chords with roots on the 6th string) and also 5th string barre chords (whose roots are found on the 5th string). I'll be using these names to avoid the confusion of naming actual chords like "E shape", "Em shape", "A shape," etc..

Chord Theory

If we're going to study barre chords, we need to develop at least a basic understanding of chord theory. Our definition of a chord will be "three-or-more notes played at the same time." Each note must have a different name though — playing three A notes in different octaves does not create a chord!

There are many kinds of chords with many different names, but the two most important chords in Western music are major and minor chords. For now, you can think of them as happy and sad, or bright and dark — though that is a severe simplification, it'll help us distinguish the two from each other as we start.

Major chords, like the ones we've just learned to play, only contain three notes. No more, no less. As a guitarist, this might seem like a surprise – aren't we strumming 6 different notes in the shape we've just learned? However, closely looking at the notes created by the 6th string major shape will show that it only produces three unique names. For example, the A shape we've been practicing only consists of the notes A C# and E, as shown below:

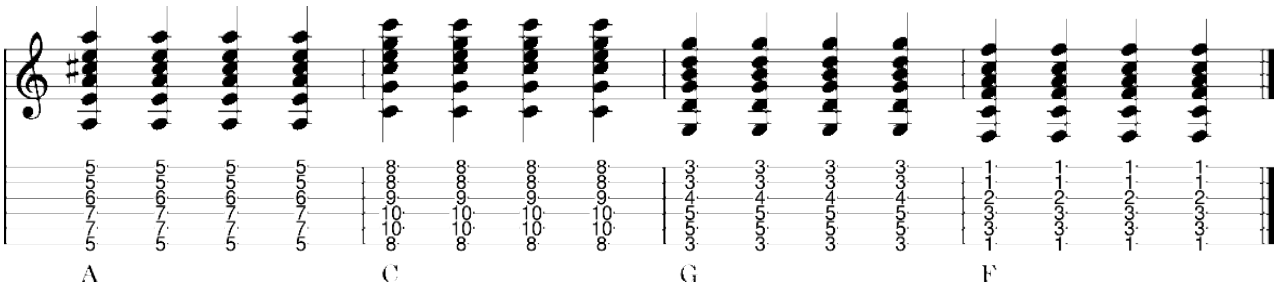


If you have access to a piano or keyboard, try playing transferring these same notes to that instrument. Then, try rearranging the same notes on the keyboard but in a different order. You'll easily discover many ways to "voice" the same chord. That's an advantage of the piano — it's very easy to play the same chord different ways.

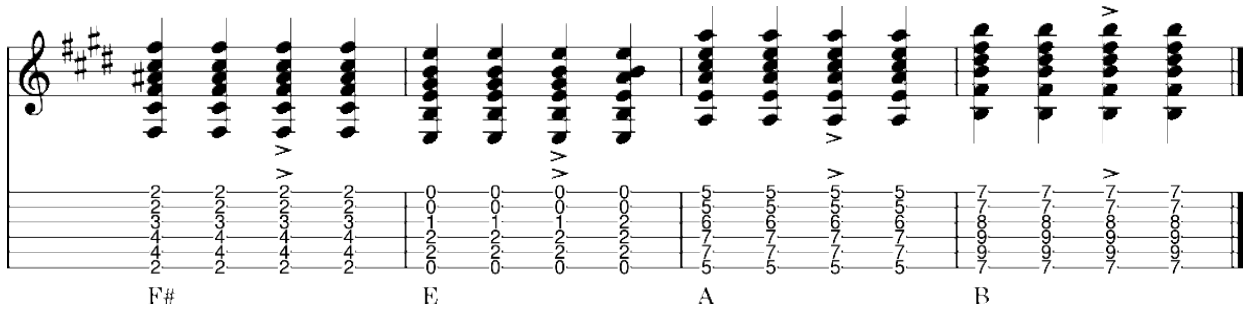
The guitar, by contrast, can be very limiting. Sometimes, a complex chord can only be fretted in a few different ways. The guitar's giant advantage though is the aspect of movable shapes, as we're seeing now. One single shape can be shifted around up and down the neck to create all sorts of different major chords, and no work needs to be done to "find the right note" — you just move up or down!

Week 2 Exercises

Play the following chords on a loop: A – C – E – G. Each chord will be played using the barre chord shape we've learned, except the E chord. That chord is open, and can be fretted however you like (though I prefer you use the "wrong fingers" as we learned in the last lesson). As you play each barre chord, pay special attention to its name and its fret location to help commit the 6th string notes to memory.

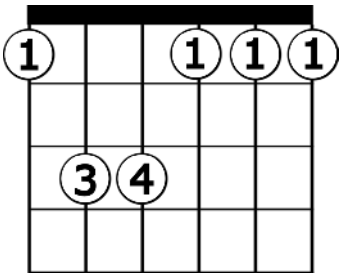


Next, we'll play a different sequence of barre chords and start adding accents to our strumming, which are strums that are louder than the surrounding ones. Adding accents in the right places can make a simple progression sound much more enjoyable. We know which strums get an accent by looking for the > symbol above or below the note. In this example, the 3rd strum of each chord is accented.



LESSON 3: 6TH STRING MINOR SHAPE

To play every minor chord, all we need is this moveable shape:



This shape is more difficult than the major shape we just learned, because the index finger has to now fret the 3rd string. If you're having trouble getting it to ring out, refer back to the advice in lesson 1 — experiment with your index finger's height, and make sure you're practicing in an easy spot of the neck (near the 5th or 7th fret, not down low near fret 1).

The lowest note of this shape determines the name of the chord. Placing it on the 5th fret for example creates an A minor chord (which we write as Am for short). Placing it on the 3rd fret would create a Gm. Since we've already learned the notes on our 6th string, we can now technically play every minor chord (though very high and low frets might be difficult).

Minor Chord Theory

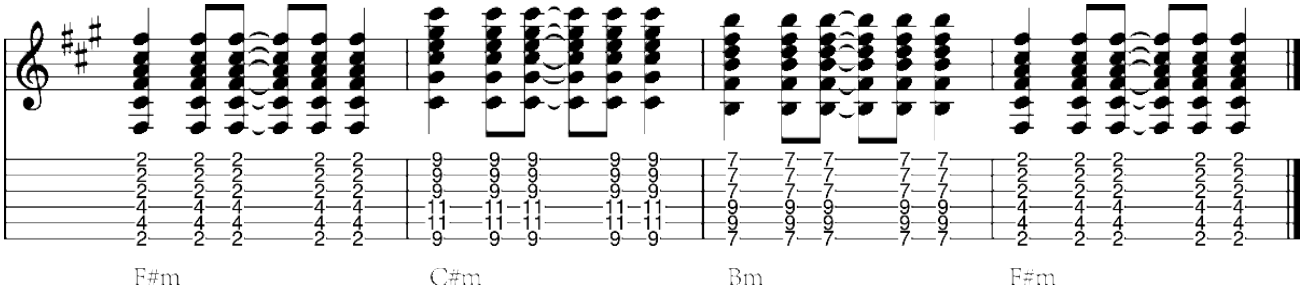
If you compare the sound of an A major chord to that of an Am chord, you should easily detect that major is more optimistic-sounding than minor. Though this is a drastic difference in emotion, we've only changed one note in the chord.

Minor chords, just like major chords, consist of only three notes. An A major chord, for example, uses the notes A – C# – E, which we often call by numbers “1 3 5.” The Am chord uses A – C – E, which is also called “1 ♭3 5.” Notice that the only difference between a minor chord and a major chord is that middle note, which we often call the 3rd: moving it one way or the other can switch the chord quality from major to minor.

If you haven’t learned your intervals and scale degrees yet, this is a good time to start. We won’t explore them in detail here, so I highly suggest you read the free sample chapter of my book The Chord Progression Codex where the absolute basics of music theory are taught. The remaining chapters in that book focus exclusively on how to write with chords and understand complex progressions — if you’d like to master the use of chords (instead of the technique), you will find it extremely helpful.

Week 3 Exercises

This exercise uses only minor barre chords with their root on the 6th string. Ensure that every note rings out while you strum.

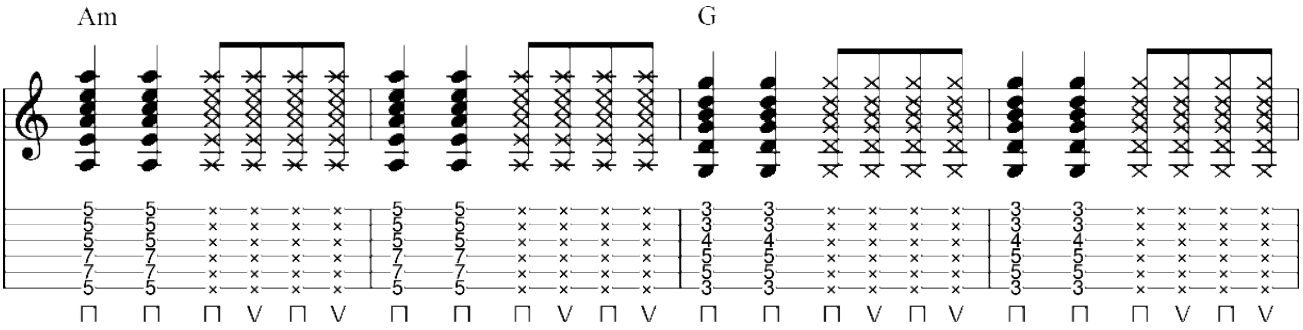


LESSON 4: MUTED STRUMS

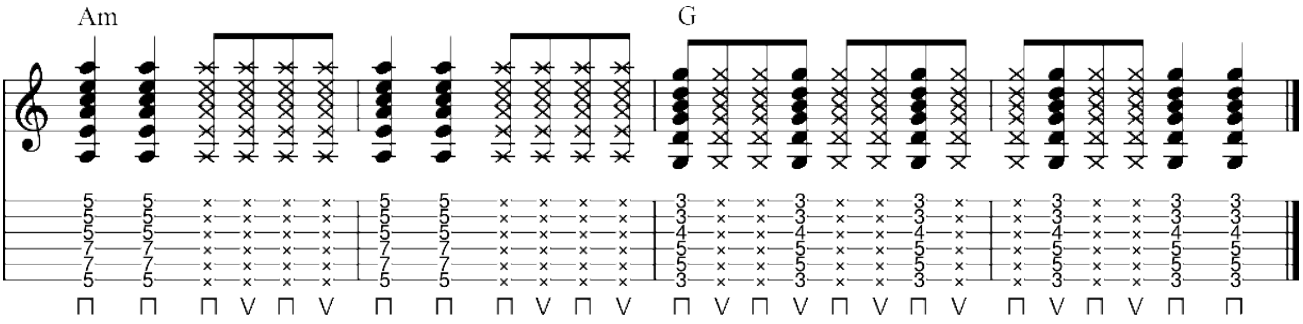
Try fretting a barre chord, and then releasing all the pressure from your thumb so that your fingers just lightly touch the strings. Now when you strum all the strings, none should actually ring out, and instead you'll get a chunky scraping sound. Let your pick strum up and down and you'll get a classic "chucka chucka" sound, an essential ingredient to guitar rhythm patterns. This sound is sometimes desirable and intentionally used as part of a riff or progression. Other times, it's a sound that is accidentally created as a guitarist moves their fingers from one chord to another without leaving the fretboard completely.

Exercises

This progression uses two barre chords: Am and G, located on the 5th fret and 3rd fret respectively. Try your best to "lock" your index, ring, and pinkie fingers in place while switching between these chords. The middle finger will move on-and-off between chords. Notice here on tablature how muted strums are indicated with an "x" symbol.



Here's an advanced version of the same progression. Your fretting hand will have to squeeze on-and-off on just the right strums to get this to sound right. If you can play this, you're only one chord away from playing the iconic ending of Led Zeppelin's "*Stairway to Heaven*."



Note that this technique is also popular when fretting power chords (which we won't be talking about in this course).

Special Advice

You must leave just the right amount of pressure between your thumb and fingers for the strum to sound correct. If your fingers are pressed down too hard, a fretted note might accidentally ring out. Too loose and an open might string might sustain.

Even if you get the pressure just right though, you still might have a bad-sounding chuckah... There are a few specific areas on your fretboard (like the 12th fret, 7th fret, and 5th fret) that don't quite "chuck" like the other frets do. You can notice this when doing chuckah on a B or Bm chord (where you're barring the 7th fret). The chucka rings out more than it should even if you are doing this correctly. That happens because those frets are nodes of the string where harmonics occur. Without getting into the details, if you lightly touch a string directly above the 5th, 7th, or 12th fret, you can still pluck that string and it'll ring out — it just won't vibrate at that location (which is a node of a standing wave).

This problem is intensified while playing through an amplifier with distortion, and can create a lot of unwanted noise. To remedy this, you can slightly shift your hand up or down a few frets to leave the harmonic zone. Alternatively, you can choose to "unlock" the fingers on your fretting hand and instead lay them flat across the strings, covering more surface area of the string. Either method can help reduce that undesired clamor.

LESSON 5: FRET HAND RESTS

When we rest a note or chord, we completely stop it from ringing out. This can be done many ways, but the technique that we're concerned about as guitarists learning barre chords is the fret-hand rest. We can easily perform this technique by fretting a barre chord, strumming it, and then just barely releasing the clamping pressure from our thumb.

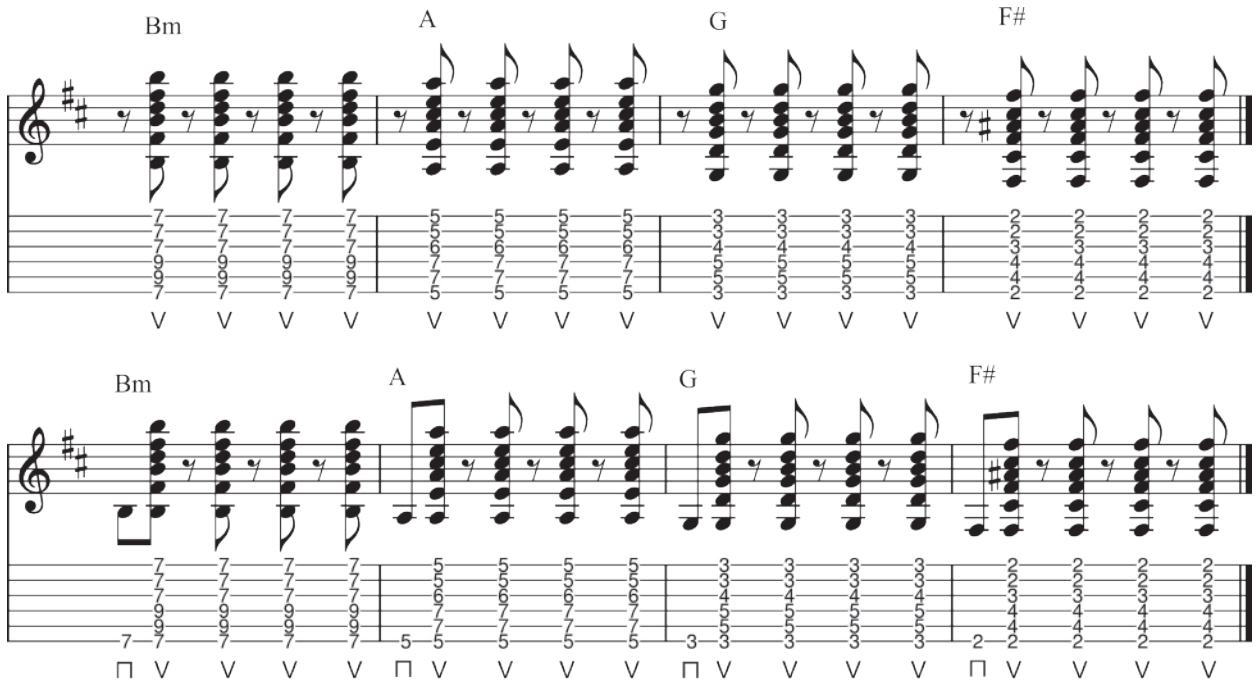
This technique allows for intricate dynamics that many beginning guitarists ignore. What rhythm patterns quickly teach us is that silence is equally important as a played note — a strum has more musical impact when it follows a brief rest.

There are many ways to notate a rest, but since this course isn't on rhythm, we'll only explore two. First is the "8th note rest" — when you see it, you need to ensure that all notes cease! It looks like this:

Additionally, a dot above or below a note on the music staff means it is played staccato, meaning it does not sustain for long and should be immediately rested. When you see such a dot, you could perform the rest many ways, but for this course you'll exclusively do a fret-hand rest.

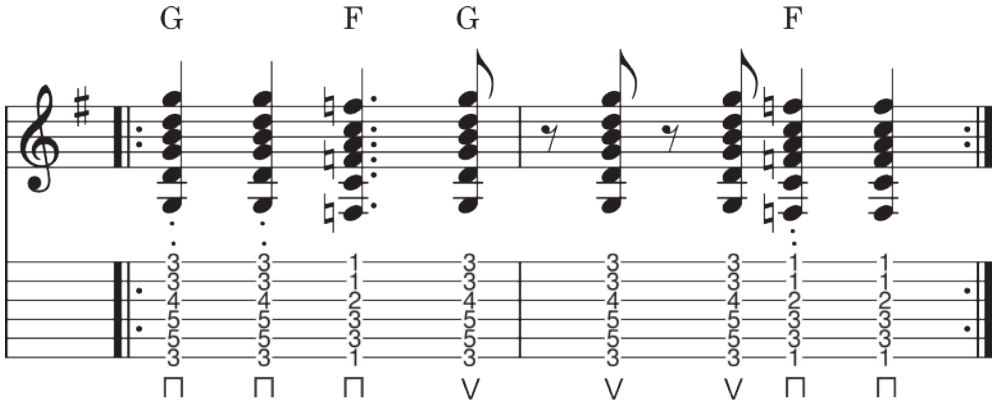
Exercises

The rhythm patterns below are popular in ska and reggae, and are syncopated rhythms. That means that they occur on upbeats, not downbeats. To practice this, tap your foot to a steady pulse and then perform strums between each tap. Each strum should be immediately followed up with a fret-hand rest.



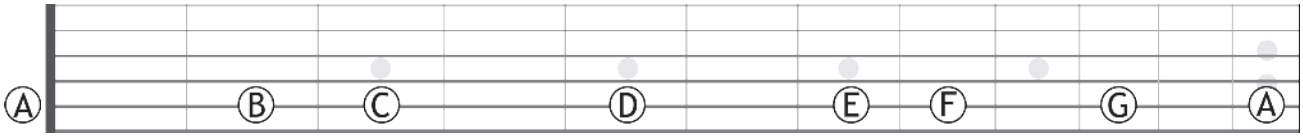
You should take note that the chord progression used in those examples is overwhelmingly popular. It's called the Andalusian Cadence, and can be found in music in many styles across centuries.

This next exercise is very tricky, despite only containing two chords. You must pay close attention to which strums will get "killed" with a fret-hand rest, and which will sustain in full. Remember that a dot under/above a note means it must be played staccato, but a dot besides a note does not. That symbol just extends a note's rhythmic value (a topic we won't discuss here, but you should aim to understand in your future studies).

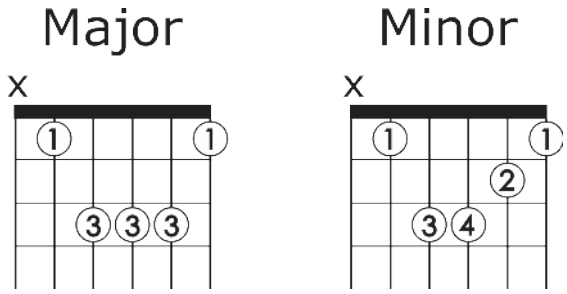


LESSON 6: 5TH STRING SHAPES

Let's face it — even though we can technically play every major chord in music, a chord like E♭ (aka D#) isn't very practical to fret. It lives all the way up on the 11th fret, and your fingers likely can't squeeze into that small space. That's why we're now going to learn moveable chord shapes whose roots are located on the 5th string. If we examine this map of our 5th string (which is part of your job this week), we can see that E♭/D# is in a pretty comfortable location near the center of our fretboard on the 6th fret.



Once we've found a note on our 5th string, we can then fret either of the two shapes to create a major or minor chord. Pay special attention to this new minor shape — I know it looks very similar to the major shape we've been working with, so don't confuse the two!



How To Actually Play That 5th String Shape

I won't sugar-coat it — this major shape is very frustrating. Please remember though, ever single thing that you can now do easily on your guitar was once impossible for you. There's a very good chance that you'll find this major shape to be impossible right now, but if you just keep practicing, it too shall be an easy thing to do. The 5th string major shape requires us to cover three entire strings with our ring finger — not an easy ask. To accomplish this, I think it's helpful to forget about the index finger all together and just practice the "staircase bend" of your ring finger across those frets. Ensure you're on the correct side of the fret, and experiment with your thumb/elbow placement as well.

Once you can do that, then add your index finger in but only fret the root note (on the 5th string). Don't worry about that high string yet — think of that as a "bonus note" for now. You'll eventually want to get it ringing out, but your current goal is to get 4 of these 5 strings ringing out cleanly and easily. Practice near the center of your fretboard right now, like on the 5th fret for a D major. This will be easier that practicing a chord like B♭ (on the first fret) where the string tension is high and the frets are far apart.

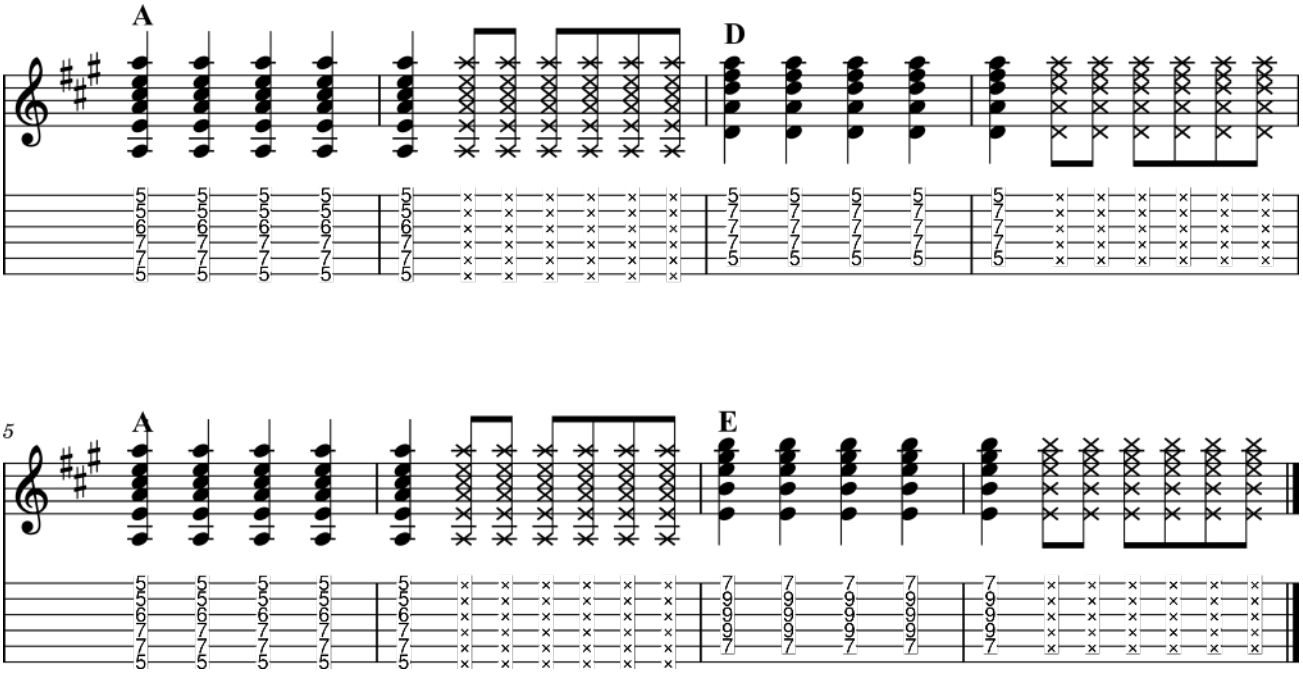
Once you can get 4 notes cleanly, work on adjusting your index finger so that it catches the 1st string as well. Your index finger really doesn't need to really "barre" flat here, it can curl easily and hit both required notes without much strain, pressure, or tension. It only has to hit two notes, so don't add more pressure to this finger than you need.

The final challenge is to get your ring finger out of the way. allowing the 1st string to ring out. The ring finger often rubs up against that first string preventing it from sustaining, or worse, frets it completely and creates the wrong note to ring. You should experiment with lifting it as high as possible on the fretboard, to where it nearly rubs up against the 5th string, to hopefully create more clearance. In rare cases, you might find more success using your pinkie instead of your ring finger.

If you're on an acoustic, I highly suggest switching to electric for a bit to make learning this chord easier. I'm an experienced player and I can still struggle to produce this barre chord cleanly on an acoustic guitar that isn't perfectly set up.

Exercises

Once you're comfortable getting 4 out of the 5 strings ringing out of your major chord shape, try out this basic rock pattern. We're playing what's called a "I – IV – V progression" in the key of A. (If you want to understand what that means, watch this video). We're using chuckah-chuckahs in between chord changes, which means your fingers can actually start switching very early as to arrive at the next chord on time.



Your next exercise is to play the following progression using a ska/reggae rhythm, just how we practiced in the last lesson. Instead of writing out tablature though, I'm only going to write out chord names. You need to rely on your knowledge of the fretboard and your barre chord shapes to discover a good way to play it.

E – G# – C#m – B

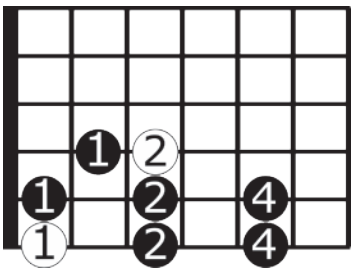
Don't play that E chord open – this is a course on barre chords! Then once you think you've strung together the correct shapes, take a listen to "Santeria" by Sublime to see how it compares to their arrangement of the same chords.

LESSON 7: DIATONIC CHORDS

If you've gone through all this trouble to learn barre chords, it would be an outrageous oversight to not understand how to make them sound good together. Learning our diatonic chords (chords that exist within a scale), and how they relate to moveable shapes will make writing music a breeze. It'll also make it easier to learn music by ear, since so much music works by these "rules."

Major Scale Movable Shape

First, learn to play a major scale on your guitar with the root on the 6th string. There's many shapes that accomplish this, but here's the one we'll be using:

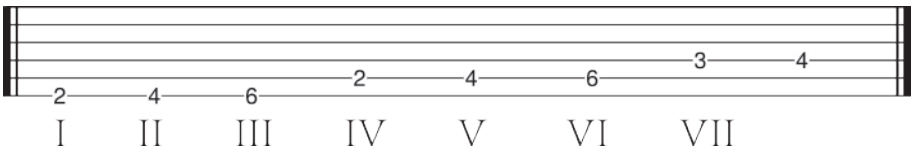


Here's how this shape works — find a note on your 6th string, which we'll call the root, then play the shape. It'll automatically generate the notes of that major scale. If you picked C as the root for example, this shape will produce the notes of the C major scale.

What's cool about guitar shapes is that they create the correct notes without us needing to know the names. For example, moving this shape to the 2nd fret creates the notes of the F# or G♭ major scale. That's a nasty scale, with six sharps or flats depending on how you write it, and naming each note correctly can be quite difficult for a beginner. However, finding those notes is just as easy as playing the shape!

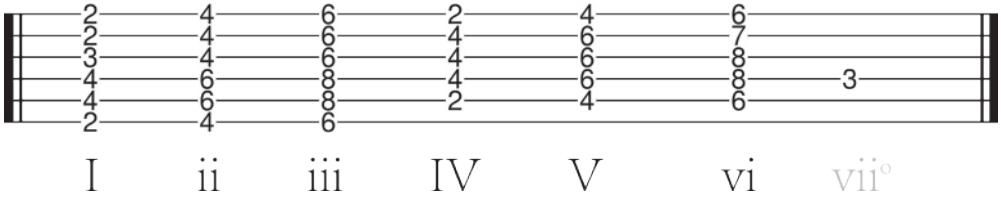
Roman Numerals

Let's again play that F# major scale by starting on the low 2nd fret and again playing the scale shape. Instead of naming those notes with letters, let's number them using roman numerals like this: I II III IV V VI VII.



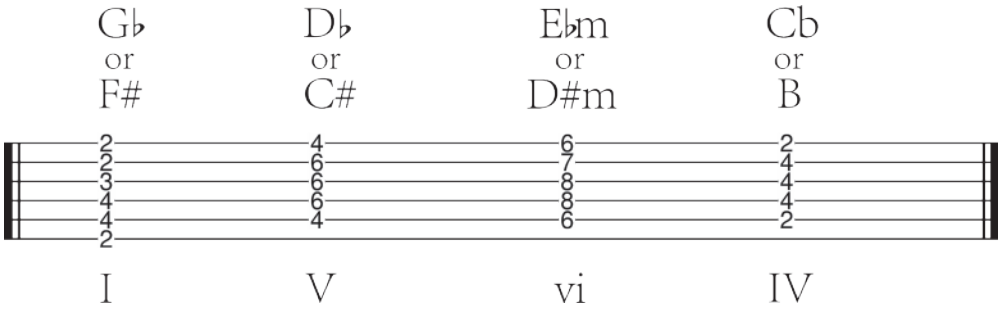
The next step will seem like a bit of magic for now if you don't know music theory. If you want to understand why this works, then consider getting The Chord Progression Codex or the Signals Music Theory and Songwriting course where it is all explained.

We will now assign each note its own type of chord. Some notes will be home to major chords, some to minor chords. I, IV, and V are all going to get their own major chord. Notes II, III, and VI will all get their own minor chord. To convey this info, we'll simply use lowercase numerals to represent minor and keep the numerals uppercase to represent major.



Why is the seventh numeral (VII) missing? Long story short, that note can not support neither major nor minor chords, but a chord called diminished. That's outside the scope of this course but is discussed in detail in the Chord Progression Codex, and the Theory and Songwriting Course.

Now, you can play diatonic chord progressions in the key of F# like the ones we hear all over the radio. For example, try out a I – V – vi – IV, as heard in songs like "Paparazzi" by Lady Gaga and "Forever Young" by Alphaville. Simply find "I", which in our current scenario is the low 2nd fret, F#. Since the numeral is uppercase, we'll play the major shape you learned in lesson 1. Next we find V, which according to our chart is located on the 5th string on the 4th fret. We give that a major chord. Find vi and give it the appropriate minor shape, and close out with IV (the 2nd fret on the 5th string) to get this progression:



Notice how the actual chord names for this progression are quite cluttered, yet the numeral representation is clean. This is another of many advantages you'll gain when working with numerals and scale degrees, as opposed to only letter names.

You truly are equipped now to write hit songs in any key, without having to worry about enharmonics, key signatures, or any of that theoretical jazz. Just find a scale, plug in the correct diatonic chords, and start writing! If you need some inspiration, here's a few popular progressions and loops that are compiled in Chapter 5 of The Chord Progression Codex: (see next page).

SONG TITLE	ARTIST	SECTION	4-CHORD LOOP			
			I	ii	IV	V
"My Girl"	The Temptations	Chorus	G	Am	C	D
"Wide Open Spaces"	Dixie Chicks	Chorus	E	F#m	A	B
"99 Luftbaloons"	Nena	Verses	E	F#m	A	B
			I	IV	V	V
"Twist And Shout"	Isley Brothers	Whole Song	F	B♭	C	C
"La Bamba"	Ritchie Valens	Whole Song	C	F	G	G
"Hold My Hand"	Hootie and the Blowfish	Chorus	B	E	F#	F#
			I	I	IV	V
"Buddy Holly"	Weezer	Chorus	A	A	D	E
"Blitzkreig Bop"	Ramones	Whole Song	A	A	D	E

Exercise

Arrange the song *"Canon in D"* by Pachebel all by yourself using only barre chords. You don't have to play the song in D though, just pick any starting root and build the diatonic chords from there.

I – V – vi – iii – IV – I – IV – V

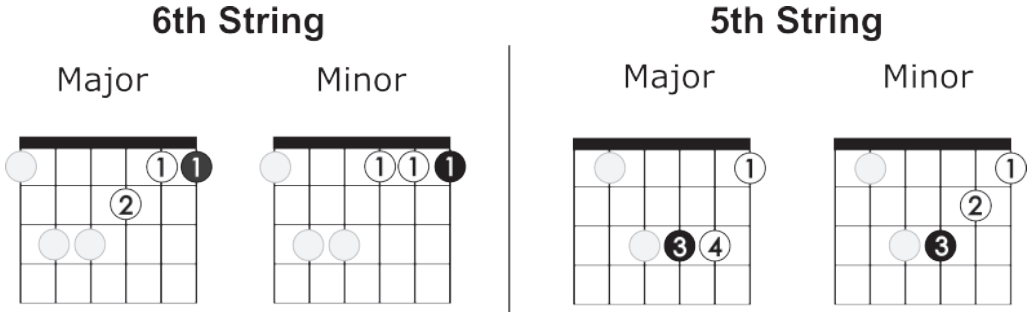
Once you can play the chord progression, then write out the names of each chord. Try transposing the progression into different keys by starting on a different root and naming that "I" instead.

LESSON 8: PARTIAL CHORDS

We've gone through the hard work of being able to play entire barre chords, now we can make things easy for ourselves by removing some of their notes and playing partial chords instead. Playing bits of a chord instead of the full thing can provide more sophisticated and delicate "colors" that are easier to play, and are common in many genres like fingerstyle, jazz, ska, rock, and more.

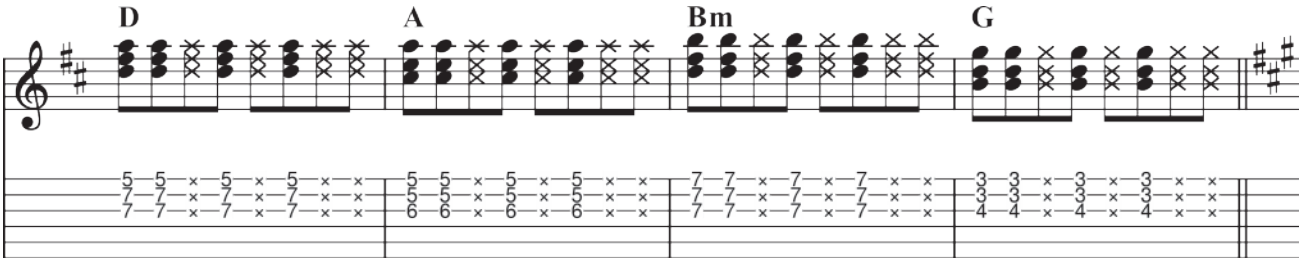
Just The High Strings

It's common to see "barre chords" that only use the high strings. In these settings, you don't need to go through all the work of fretting a barre chord's low notes, and can instead use different fingers to make the work easier. Below, we've taken our four main shapes and retooled them to only use the three highest strings. Since the 5th and 6th string is no longer being played, it's a bit deceptive to call these 5th and 6th string shapes, but you should be able to clearly see how they've derived from those parent shapes.

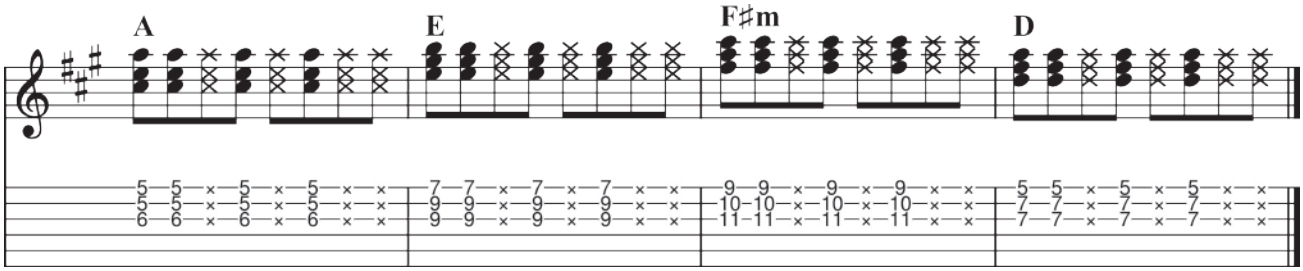


Because the 5th/6th string is absent in these shapes, I've colored in the "new" root position so you can track what chord you're playing. Whatever note that is, that's the name of the chord being fretted. Seeing things this way should motivate you to now start learning the notes on strings 1 & 3 if you haven't already. Fortunately you already know the notes on the 1st string — they lay out exactly like the already-mastered 6th string!

To practice using these, first try out this ska pattern using a I – vi – IV – V progression in D. We'll begin by playing D with a 5th string shape, then the rest of the chords use slimmed-down versions of 6th string shapes. Use strict alternate strumming (down-up) and pay close attention to which strums get chuckahd.



Now here's that same progression but in the key of A. This time, we'll begin with a 6th string shape for A, while the other chords use partial 5th string shapes.

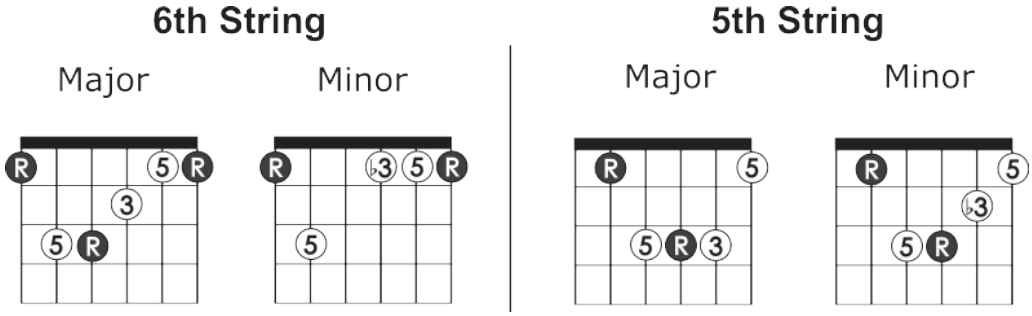


Inversions

The four full barre chord shapes we studied through this course have all been considered "root position chords," meaning that their lowest note (aka bass note) is also the name of the chord. When we place a different note on the bass, the chord is considered to be **inverted**. Two of the partial shapes we've just learned are considered inversions — when we trimmed down those 6th string shapes, we were left with chords whose lowest note was *not* the root.

Come up with your own inversions and partial voicings of the barre chords we've learned. Start by using these charts to memorize exactly where the root notes are in our four main shapes. You can see that the big 6th string shape contains three instances of the root note in different octaves, while the 5th string shape only contains two.

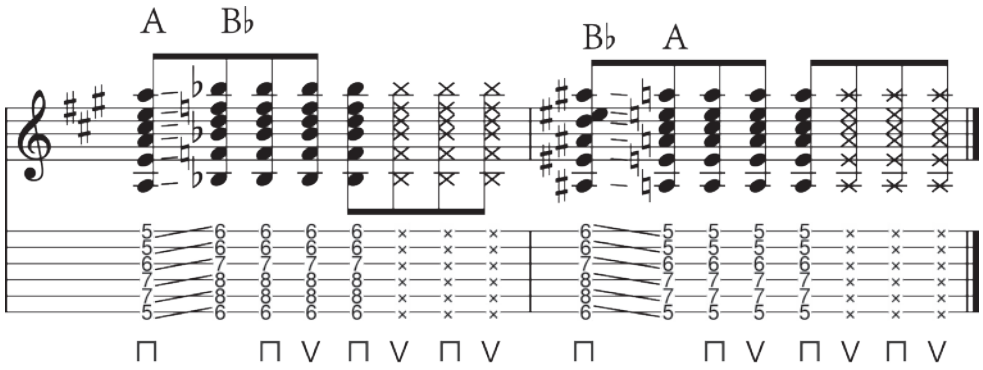
You should also aim to memorize the other notes in each shape, and what their role is: third, minor third, or fifth. These intervals are all taught in the free intro chapters of the Chord Progression Codex.



When you learn more advanced shapes, always ensure you're learning where their roots are located, and experiment with playing them as partial chords as we've done here. This can lead to a better sounding progression, or sometimes just an easier way to play it without sacrificing much musicality.

LESSON 9: SLIDES AND LEGATO

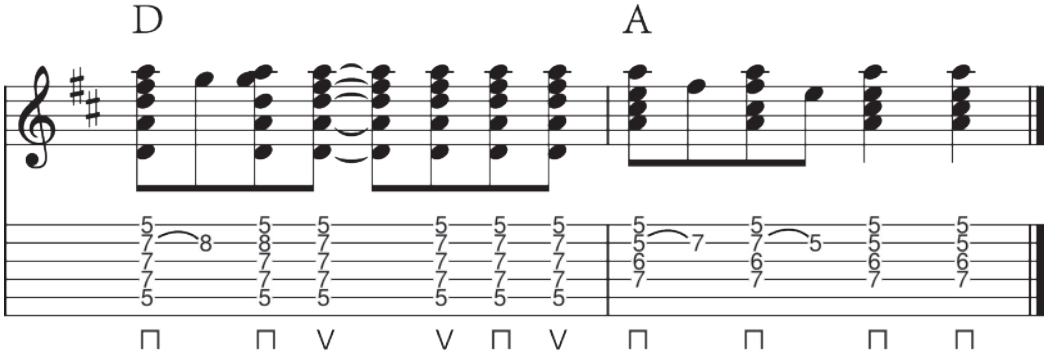
It's a pretty common feature in rock music to hear a guitarist strum a barre chord, then slide it up or down to create a smooth glissando between two chords. Try practicing this by anchoring your thumb on your fretboard, strumming a barre chord, and then squeezing your fingers forward or backward to the adjacent fret. Here's an exercise you can practice with:



If you're comfortable with that, try learning *"Fly Away"* by Lenny Kravitz, a song whose main riff features a barre-chord slide and some chuckah chuckahs.

Legato

Legato phrases (that means hammer-ons and pull-offs for guitarists) are wonderful features to include within a chord. That means that any fingers that are free while fretting a barre chord should be prepared for duty. Here's an example of how that often looks using some familiar shapes:



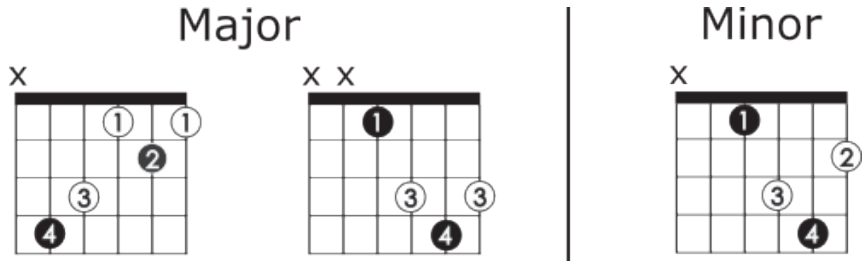
Like that sound? All the more reason to continue studying chord theory, and not just barre chord technique. What we're hearing in the above example is a D moving to one of its suspended variations, and an A moving to an A6. The more you learn about chord theory, the more you can apply its teachings to the barre chord shapes you've mastered.

LESSON 10: ADVANCED STUDIES

If you've made it this far, you're more than prepared to tackle the larger world of barre chords and movable-shapes. Here's a few items you should aim to master in the future.

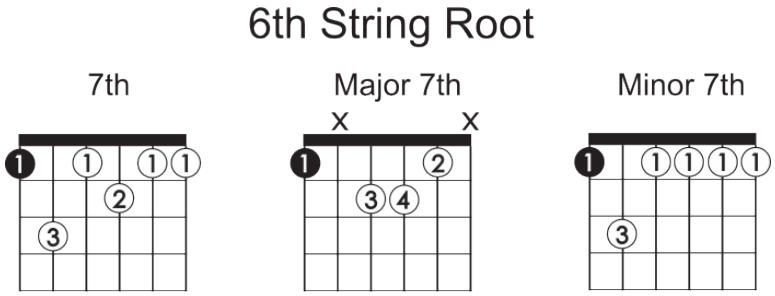
4th String Shapes

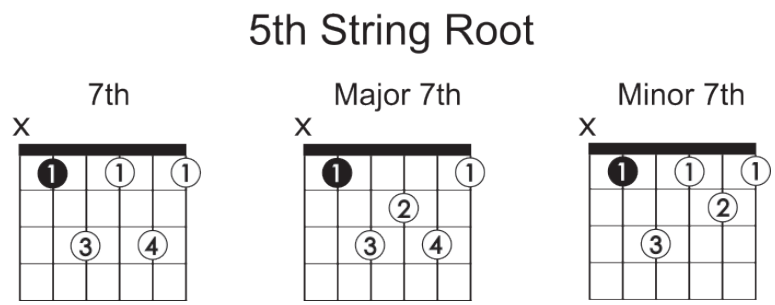
There are many ways to create a movable major or minor chord. Here's some other shapes you might encounter, some of which have their root on the 4th string.



Seventh Chords

The major and minor chords we've learned are the simplest chords in music. They frequently are "enhanced" with extra notes to create chords like Major 7th, Minor 7th, and Dominant 7th chords. To play these popular chords is as simple as memorizing their shape. However, with a knowledge of music theory, you can instead build the chords yourself and create your own shapes. We can't explore them all, but here are a few movable shapes you'll probably encounter:





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That's all for now... go practice your barre chords!